

Communication with Respondents in TurkStat

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Abstract and Paper

It is clear that strengthening ways of communication and automation of data production procedures are necessary for data collection in order to reduce manpower needs, lower costs and accelerate the process of data collection. With the help of developing technology and increasing use of administrative sources, new data collection techniques to achieve further burden reduction is now a necessity. The importance of the communication with respondents appears at this point.

As in the business world, Statistical agencies have to improve relations with respondents and establish cooperation based on trust. Therefore the only way of achieving this is to express themselves in a proper way. Especially in Turkey, it's essential to make community understand that the information they submit is used to make major social and economic policies.

In the last ten years with the advancing technologic opportunities, all the international companies and government agencies have to keep up with these changes and reorganize their organisational structures to communicate efficiently with the public. Not only TurkStat but also all the other NSIs collecting data have to consider and find better ways;

- to get more reliable data from the respondents,
- to get modern and reachable methods for dissemination of the statistics,
- to create awareness about statistics

The word of "communication" is getting increasingly complex due to the use of technology and widespread use of social media all around the world. In today's world, the public institutions have to adapt their organizational structure to the swiftly changing conditions of the modern society. Communication with respondents in NSOs is a whole sophisticated and combined process that includes all from interviewer's behaviours to total perception management in the society. In this work, communication with respondents will be discussed in detail.

Keywords

Communication with respondents



Communication with Respondents in TurkStat

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TurkStat is a two sided institution with a central organization consists of 19 departments which are mostly main services (subject matter units) and a regional organization that is made up of 26 regional offices country wide.

In the aim of fully joining the European Statistical System (ESS), TurkStat has compliance on EU Acquis and the requirements of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Data Collection in Turkstat

It is clear that strengthening ways of communication and automation of data production procedures are necessary for data collection in order to reduce manpower needs, lower costs and accelerate the process of data collection. With the help of developing technology and increasing use of administrative sources, new data collection techniques to achieve further burden reduction is now a necessity. The importance of the communication with respondents appears at this point.

Turkstat is planning to redesign all its national social surveys in a way that data collection for them is achieved also via web as well as effective use of CATI mode. Turkstat has a platform in order to implement these two modes also. Currently, CAPI is used as data collection mode for all social surveys conducted in Turkstat

Survey Portal called “Harzemli” (self-completion of computer-assisted questionnaires via Web survey) and EDI (electronic data interchange) Technologies the so called “e-VT” (standard business reporting programs for reporting business data and electronic interchange) is used in Turkstat.

Harzemli System provides respondent units to fill in electronic questionnaires by themselves in a comfortable and a safe manner with the passwords assigned to them.

The Approach to the Respondents in Turkstat

As in the business world, Statistical agencies have to improve relations with respondents and establish cooperation based on trust. Therefore the only way of achieving this is to express themselves in a proper way. Especially in Turkey, it’s essential to make community understand that the information they submit is used to make major social and economic policies.

In the last ten years with the advancing technologic opportunities, all the international companies and government agencies have to keep up with these changes and reorganize their organizational structures to communicate efficiently with the public. Not only TurkStat but also all the other NSIs collecting data have to consider and find better ways;

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The Strong Statistical Law

The Turkish statistical law is very strong against to the respondents in the meaning of taking the necessary data. Nevertheless Turkstat tries to establish a reliable connection with the community and the respondents.

Turkish statistical law article 54 specifies the conditions of the administrative fines:

“Those who fail to submit the information requested by the Presidency or other institutions and organizations in specified form and time or submit incomplete or incorrect information, are first given a warning to submit information requested or cover gaps or correct mistakes within a period of one week. In case no information is submitted or no correction/supplement is made in spite of this warning, real persons or organs and representatives of private law legal entities concerned are imposed administrative fines of...”

Moreover, “Imposition of administrative fines or other punitive measures do not remove of the statistical units’ obligation to provide information” sentence makes the law stronger.

Communication with Respondents in Turkstat

The word of “communication” is getting increasingly complex due to the use of technology and widespread use of social media all around the world. In today’s world, the public institutions have to adapt their organizational structure to the swiftly changing conditions of the modern society. Communication with respondents in NSOs is a whole sophisticated and combined process that includes all from interviewer’s behaviours to total perception management in the society.

In Turkstat, besides social media applications there are mainly three ways of communication with respondents:

- ✓ Information Letters / Leaflets
- ✓ Short Message Services
- ✓ Respondent Information Module

Informative Letters

Since 2013 sending the information letters to the respondents is under the responsibility of Coordination Of Data Collection Department and the letters are sent centrally. Earlier, regional offices were sending different informative letters for different surveys.

Within the time periods on Production Process Calendar, all informative letters are sent to addresses centrally before the beginning of fieldwork of each survey due to an agreement between TurkStat and Turkish Post Office

Sending informative letters centrally has contributed greatly to:

- Time
- Cost
- Manpower

The headlines in the informative letters and leaflets are mentioned below:

- ✓ The info about the institution and the survey (What we do)
- ✓ The legal basis of the work (Why we do)
- ✓ The info about how to fulfill the questionnaire (How we do)
- ✓ Confidentiality of Information (Confidence)
- ✓ The deadline of the survey (When)
- ✓ The contact numbers of the regional offices (Where)
- ✓ *Respondent Information Module link* for further information

Tablo 1: Number of informative letters sent by years

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nr. Of Surveys	46	66	59	64	51
Nr. Of Letters Sent	816.606	833.842	1.051.740	592.575	602.839

Short Message Service (SMS)

- Since 2015, TurkStat has been using short message services (SMS) especially for the short term business surveys as a reminder.
- It is also used in “labour force survey” and “household budget surveys”.
- According to the principles of sending SMS to responders;
 - ✓ In every unit, at the regional offices, two personnel are charged with sending SMS.
 - ✓ The messages are only for the surveys determined before.
 - ✓ The content of the messages are specified for each survey.

Table 2: Reminder messages (SMS) that sent to respondents by years

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nr Of SMS	57.363	181.596	249.243	170.170

1 or 2 days before the fieldwork, the following SMS message is sent to households for selected surveys.

“ Your household will be visited by the Turkstat staff in ... /.../... for the Survey .For further information please call “

The content of the message for a business survey:

“ the online data entry for the survey compiled by the Regional Office is available from now on. TurkStat kindly reminds you to fulfill the questionnaire.

For further questions contact numbers of the regional office are”

Respondent Information Module on Turkstat Website

Since 2017, there is a respondent information module on Turkstat website on which respondents can get information about the surveys, about the statistical production process, the legal basis and procedures and answers to FAQ's. Besides there is also a part for feedbacks as requests, suggestions and complaints which are answered in 24 hours in return. In 2018, there were 112 feedbacks for 29 different surveys through this module.

The aims of the module:

- ✓ To inform the respondents about the surveys
- ✓ Centralized data flow
- ✓ Create awareness about the institution's duties
- ✓ Increase the respondent satisfaction

Links In Respondent Information Module

- Brief information about the surveys
- Last Press Release link about the survey
- National Data Release Calendar link
- Harzemli link for business surveys

- Contact information of regional directorates
- FAQs

Call Center Project

In today's world, the public institutions have to adapt their organizational structure to the swiftly changing conditions of the modern society. The importance of the communication in country wide organizations becomes more apparent day by day.

At the moment Turkstat has some ongoing projects (redesign of website, respondent information module, establishing new dissemination methods and studies on a statistical call center) about searching and developing modern methods of access to statistical information. A pilot project about collecting data with CATI method in Labour Force Survey (LFS) is in progress at the moment. In the same manner, rental prices in Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been collecting with CATI method for two years. Through this experience now establishing a statistical call center project is on the agenda to increase the respondent satisfaction.